



EASR 2018

Multiple Religious Identities

16th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions

17-21 June 2018, Bern

June 17, 17:00-18:00 (HSZ vonRoll, Fabrikstr. 6, 001)

The Ambiguity of the Religious Self in Pre- and Postnational Social Worlds. Examples from 17th Century Morocco and 20th Century Germany

Reinhard Schulze

June 18, 11:00-12:00 (UniS, Schanzeneckstr. 1, A 003)

Multiple Religious Identities: Realities and Reflections

Grace Davie

June 18, 17:15-18:15 (UniS, Schanzeneckstr. 1, A 003)

Diversification of Religious Identities in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe: the Case of the Baltic States

Milda Ališauskienė

June 19, 11:00-12:00 (UniS, Schanzeneckstr. 1, A 003)

Urbanity and Multiple Religious identities in Antiquity

Jörg Rüpke

June 20, 11:00-12:00 (UniS, Schanzeneckstr. 1, A 003)

Religious Demarcation, Border Violation and Deviance Discourses in Medieval Religious Groups

Dorothea Weltecke

June 21, 11:00-12:00 (UniS, Schanzeneckstr. 1, A 003)

A Comparative History of saṃsāra in Early India: In and Out the Vortex of Transmigration

Eugen Ciurtin

Keynote speakers



Milda Ališauskienė

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Jörg Rüpke

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Reinhard Schulze

Professor of Islamic Studies
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Dorothea Weltecke

Professor of History
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Keynote abstracts

Diversification of Religious Identities in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe: the Case of the Baltic States – Milda Ališauskienė

The presentation will discuss the various changes that the societies of eastern and central Europe have undergone during the last three decades, focussing on the individual level of religiosity, defining the diversity of religious identities in these societies and also searching for an explanation of this process from a sociological point of view. The paper will highlight the role of religion in the everyday lives of people from these societies, and how their communities have experienced their transition from totalitarian to liberal democratic regimes. It will also look at the religious revival of the 1990s in eastern and central Europe – expressed through higher rates of religious participation and belief – that has now mostly disappeared. Recent empirical data provides grounds for discussing further changes in the societies of eastern and central Europe, where different patterns of religious lives have appeared from the more secular countries (Estonia, Czech Republic, and East Germany) compared with the more religious and conservative (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary). In addition, one might find challenges in finding explanations for religious transformation in the Orthodox countries or those countries where Orthodox communities form an influential minority. The paper is based upon analysis of empirical data from the European Value Survey and a 2017 community survey in Lithuania.

Multiple Religious Identities: Realities and Reflections – Grace Davie

This presentation will draw from the work that I have undertaken as part of the International Panel on Social Progress (see <https://www.ipsp.org/>). This is a wide-ranging project covering economic, political and cultural issues. A dominant theme within the chapter on religion – “Religions and social progress: Critical assessments and creative partnerships” – concerns the documentation and management of religious diversity in different parts of the world. In this presentation I move from the global outlines to the European case, concentrating in particular on two neighbouring societies: France and Britain. I interrogate the following question: France is, without doubt, a more democratic society than Britain, with regard to both constitutional and institutional questions. Britain, however, is – or until very recently has been – a more tolerant society than France in, for example, its acceptance of minorities over the long term and the habits of mind that come with this. What, then, is the relationship between democracy and tolerance in the European case? And what might be the consequences of current political choices – among them the decision that has become known as BREXIT?

A Comparative History of *saṃsāra* in Early India: In and Out the Vortex of Transmigration – Eugen Ciurtin

The lecture presents a new outline of the doctrine of *saṃsāra* in Indic religions. ‘Karman and rebirth’ have played a seminal role in the generalist and comparative history of religions in India and beyond, regardless of the standard difficulty of their origin considered by many to be “the single greatest problem of Indological studies” (Salomon 1982, 410). In contrast, *saṃsāra* as the inscrutable realm of transmigration – operating precisely for multiple religious identities – is decidedly less studied and understood. *Saṃsāra* as a word most likely made its first appearance in the Kaṭha-upaniṣad III.7 and the Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad VI.15-16. Vedic-Brahmanical, Jain, Buddhist, Ājīvika and Hindu doctrinal and narrative assortments of transmigration will be corroborated in order to define the shared landscape of *saṃsāra*. Various seen as a vast ‘sea’, ‘ocean’, ‘whirlpool’, ‘prison’, ‘wilderness’ and the like, *saṃsāra* will subsequently provide the best analytic tool in discerning and differentiating the religious dynamics in India, through selected comparisons: transmigration and memory (the string of predecessors of a jina or a buddha); interdictions (from dietary to conjugal to funeral); salvific pessimism (with all heavens and hells becoming enduringly purgatorial), and cosmo-ecology (the unbreakable solidarity and circum-relevance of life). While discussing a range of recent studies, the lecture will lay emphasis on lesser aspects of the “program of transmigration” (Roṣu 1978, 147), as the *saṃsāric* ‘winds’ (in embryology), the evocative ‘scents’ (in psychology), and the prevalence of flaming/burning/blazing in the pan-Indian *saṃsāra* imaginaire. The consequences are manifold – Indians being consequential, and the category of ‘religion’ even more. It was for instance the resolute wrestling of Sanskrit medical thinking with the all-pervasive notion of *saṃsāra* as true horizon of the psychosomatic entity which offered to Indians the full discovery of the unconscious (some two millennia before von Hartmann and Freud). As an exercise in macrohistory of religions, the lecture will conclude by advocating a basic distinction between religions either grounded in or excluding a form of transmigration – more effective than some older (and always Western) grand dichotomies (monotheism vs. polytheism, etc.) still prevalent in the academic study of religions.



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Urbanity and Multiple Religious identities in Antiquity – Jörg Rüpke

Religious identities imagined as collective and publicly affirmed were a late-comer in the ancient Mediterranean world, slowly developing in Hellenistic and Roman empires. Before, people engaged in different cults and easily shifted piety from one local god to the other when they were moving. Only in rare situations self-definitions were invoked with regard to religious beliefs or belongings. Family or political belonging could be expressed by referring to religious symbols, but only very specific religious roles produced anything like religious identities. The talk will explore changes in the use of specifically religious identities and the driving forces behind such changes. Building on concepts of “lived ancient religion” and religious spatiality, particular attention will be paid to processes related to urbanisation and urban growth as the most important dynamic factors. Such factors include urban aspirations that triggered migration, identification and ethnogenesis, but also the density and diversity of living quarters, and the political interests of administrating and dominating urban space. A closer inspection of these combined factors will highlight their role in the development of intermittent and multiple religious identities as forms of urbanity that combined rather than mutually excluded choice and control



Jörg Rüpke

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The Ambiguity of the Religious Self in Pre- and Postnational Social Worlds. Examples from 17th Century Morocco and 20th Century Germany – Reinhard Schulze

In the framework of the European nation-state, the religious self became standardized as confessional personal identity. The homogenization of religious and nation-state fundamentally contrasts with narratives of contingent varieties of religious self-expressions which were common both in early modern times, as for example in Morocco, and in early post-modern self-interpretations as for example in Berlin after World War I. Pre- and postnational constructions of religiousness, however, are seldom studied, in contrast to the definiteness and unambiguity of modern national religious identities. Instead, the modern paradigm of religiousness is often viewed as a transhistorical model, valid even for the analysis of the pre-modern constitution of “religiosity”. Reconstructing evidences for an ambiguity of the religious self in pre- and postnational biographies enables us to define the confines of the specifically modern model of religion and to bring out alternative social models of religious self-interpretations.



Reinhard Schulze

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Religious Demarcation, Border Violation and Deviance Discourses in Medieval Religious Groups – Dorothea Weltecke

Empirical research on the “ways that never parted” in Late Antiquity has shown that theology as well as orthodoxy and religious demarcation in Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions developed only gradually. It has also been shown that speculative theology and philosophy matured through both demarcation as well as exchange, sharing theoretical concepts. Many cases of dual religious affiliations have also been highlighted. Moreover, it has been demonstrated in trans-religious studies in the European West, as well as in the Islamic world, that a wide range of shared spaces beyond religious borders in material culture, philosophy, theology and literature, never ceased to exist during this first period of Christian and Muslim rule. Within this framework of recent empirical research, this presentation will turn back to the limits of free choice on the religious marketplace in the Middle Ages. The paper will examine cases of sanctioned border violations or unclear affiliations, especially cases of (suspected) apostasy under Christian and Muslim rule. Border violation is part of the deviance discourse as well as a target of legal and social intervention, yet the borders are voluble, and they vary in rigor. While set religious propositions seem to rule the deviance discourse they apparently do not define the position of border guards and the limits of fluidity.



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